

## Contractual appointments: a new breed of corruption in the education system

Appointment of contractual staff in faculty positions, especially in the newly established central universities and institutes, is a recent variety of corruption in our education system. A number of central universities were established in 2009, within a short span of time. Two years have passed, but the recruitment of permanent faculty is still in the pipeline in many universities. Why this delay? If Vice-Chancellors of 15 central universities can be appointed within a month, why cannot faculty members be appointed within two years?

In many institutes and universities, the selection process for regular appointments is already under way. So, there should be no hurry for temporary/contractual appointments. The obvious motive is to place the contract appointees (who are usually mediocre) in an advantageous position for regular selection. It is obvious that vested interests are involved. If there are personal stakes, then the recruitment process is completed within

a month; otherwise, it takes more than a year. Fresh appointments are not done on a transparent basis. In some cases, it has been observed that institutes repeatedly advertise the posts until their desired candidates are selected. Tailor-made advertisements to suit individuals are notified and talented applicants are screened out deliberately to make way for pre-determined candidates.

There should be a time-bound recruitment process (3–6 months) for university faculty and other staff. A combined recruitment test for entry-level teachers, i.e. assistant professors, must be arranged by central universities based on the pattern of their combined admission test. It would be better if the Union Public Service Commission can take up the responsibility of appointing faculty members for all central universities, to maintain transparency as well as a time-bound procedure. If there is an urgent need for temporary academic staff, they can be appointed on the basis of deputa-

tion rather than contractual appointments.

A few months ago, faculty members of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, protested against contractual appointments. According to them, it leads to career insecurity, disorientation about the future, exploitation, financial disadvantages and stress.

The main reason for the degrading quality of teaching and research in our universities is the poor quality of teachers. It is time to rectify our recruitment process before it is too late.

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## Funding in universities

I fully endorse the ‘opinion’ by Deepak Kumar<sup>1</sup> on the decline in university science as a result of diversion of funds to newer research institutions, ostensibly at the cost of the only natural claimant, namely the university system. This is not a new phenomenon; indeed it is as old as the New Republic when Pandit Nehru started the national laboratories as part of a definite plan to promote science in independent India.

Initially of course this made sense, as these national laboratories did have a role in projecting science to the nation. But with the passage of time, the imbalance has been increasingly showing up. As a matter of fact, I had attempted to bring this anomaly to the notice of the scientific community through the very

columns of this august journal<sup>2</sup>, with precisely the theme of discrimination against the university system. And now with the number of universities of all categories (‘deemed’ or otherwise) exceeding the 500 mark, the problem of quality education has assumed menacing proportions. Not that the prestigious national laboratories are doing any better – after all, the basic inputs for these institutions must still come from the ‘poor’ university system – but the fact that the universities are suffering more is only a matter of relative comfort. This is with the full knowledge that a few of the top scientific institutions are comfortable in the company of their Western counterparts, although for a country of India’s dimensions, this number should have

been much higher. For it is indeed an irony that a country which is expected to come up as the second biggest economy in the world, next only to China, falls so short of its Big Neighbour on almost all counts, despite the bogey of democracy versus totalitarianism.

1. Deepak Kumar, *Curr. Sci.*, 2011, **101**, 149.
2. Mitra, A. N., *Curr. Sci.*, 1995, **69**, 802–808.

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